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**NEWS RELEASE**

**2006 Adult Felony Criminal Prosecutions in Dakota County**

**OVERVIEW**

Dakota County Attorney James Backstrom has released statistics for 2006 involving **adult felony criminal prosecutions** handled by his Office. These statistics do not reflect the total number of crimes occurring, but reflect the number of felony charges filed against individuals within Dakota County in 2006. The County Attorney is responsible for the prosecution of all felonies committed by adults (this includes persons age 18 and over and any juvenile certified for prosecution as an adult) that occur in the County. According to Backstrom:

- The total number of **adults charged<sup>1</sup>** with felony offenses in Dakota County decreased slightly (**1,904<sup>2</sup>** adults were charged with felony offenses in 2006, compared to 1,926 in 2005).

**INCREASE/DECREASE IN ADULTS CHARGED WITH FELONIES (BY CITY/JURISDICTION)**

Cities/Jurisdictions which showed an **increase** in the number of adults charged with felonies from 2005-2006 were:

- ↑ Apple Valley (167 to 194)
- ↑ Burnsville (335 to 372)
- ↑ Dakota County Sheriff (222 to 228)
- ↑ Eagan (208 to 232)
- ↑ West St. Paul (169 to 189)

Cities which showed a **decrease** in the number of adults charged with felonies from 2005-2006 were:

- ↓ Farmington (57 to 55)
- ↓ Hastings (122 to 103)
- ↓ Inver Grove Heights (141 to 139)
- ↓ Lakeville (173 to 137)
- ↓ Mendota Heights (30 to 18)
- ↓ Rosemount (70 to 64)
- ↓ South St. Paul (169 to 106)

**CHARGES DROP BUT ILLEGAL DRUG USE CONTINUES AS TOP PROBLEM**

**Drug offenses** continue to represent the largest category of cases charged by the Dakota County Attorney's Office. **663<sup>3</sup>** individuals were charged with felony drug crimes in Dakota County in 2006, compared to 748 the year before, a decrease of 11%. The total number of defendants charged with drug offenses in 2006 represents approximately 35% of the entire felony caseload of the Dakota County Attorney's Office. (See the attached chart for drug trends in the past ten years).

*Backstrom commented: "Illegal drug use in Dakota County and across our state continues to be an enormous problem. The dramatic increase in drug prosecutions in our community over the last decade is a sad reminder that Dakota County is not immune from the widespread problem of illegal drug use that we have in our nation. If you include all of the property crimes committed to finance illegal drug habits and the crimes of violence associated with the illegal drug trade, it is estimated that about 50% of all felony prosecutions in Dakota County are related to the sale or use of illegal drugs."*

Backstrom indicated that methamphetamine continues to be the number one illegal drug problem in Dakota County. 307 individuals were charged with meth-related felonies in Dakota County in 2006, compared to 388 the year before. Backstrom attributed most of this 21% decrease, however, to the 2005 change in law enacted by the Minnesota Legislature which restricted the sale of methamphetamine precursor chemicals, and not necessarily to a reduction in methamphetamine use in Dakota County. This law, which became effective on July 1, 2005, requires that products containing ephedrine and pseudoephedrine be sold behind pharmacy counters and restricts the quantity of these drugs which can be lawfully purchased. Backstrom said this change in the law has dramatically reduced the number of small labs producing methamphetamine in our state. In Dakota County, 9 meth labs were seized in 2006, compared to 8 in 2005. This is a significant drop, however, from the 28 meth labs seized just two years ago in the County.

*Backstrom commented: "While it is obviously good news that fewer meth labs are in operation today, over 80% of methamphetamine sold in Minnesota is smuggled into our state, most from Mexico. Meth use continues to be a significant problem in Dakota County, as it is across our state and nation. Approximately 16% of all felony crimes charged in Dakota County last year involved the sale, manufacture or possession of methamphetamine. If you add in all of the other crimes associated with meth use (i.e. theft, robberies, burglaries and crimes of violence), it is believed that meth is involved in 25-30% of all felony prosecutions in our community."*

Backstrom noted that education of community members through Town Forums concerning the dangers associated with increasing use of methamphetamine has increased awareness by citizens which is important and must continue. In the last two years, five meth forums have been held for the following communities: Rosemount, Hastings, Burnsville, Inver Grove Heights, South St. Paul, West St. Paul, and Mendota Heights. Backstrom noted that prevention and public awareness of the meth problem is also a key project of the Minnesota County Attorneys Association (MCAA). Last summer, the MCAA had a booth at the Minnesota State Fair to make the public more aware of the menace of meth in our state and has just completed a 60-minute meth documentary which will be made available for distribution by County Attorneys throughout Minnesota to schools and other groups. *"To effectively reduce methamphetamine use, we need a coordinated strategy of enforcement, treatment and prevention, and everyone in the community needs to be aware of the extent of this serious problem,"* Backstrom added.

To address the large number of illegal drug prosecutions in Dakota County, Backstrom said he is in the process of developing an Alternative Program for Repeat and Non-Violent Felony Drug Offenders. This effort will hopefully lead to the creation of a Dakota County adult "drug court" to deal with certain drug offenders in a more proactive way, with the goals of holding these offenders accountable, securing needed treatment for their drug addictions and reducing recidivism. Backstrom said he is working closely with District Court Judges Leslie Metzen and Tim McManus in creating this program, along with Dakota County Community Corrections and other criminal justice professionals. Backstrom said that the goal is to start this new program on July 1, 2007.

Backstrom also praised the continued efforts of the Dakota County Drug Task Force, which consists of officers from the Dakota County Sheriff's Department and police departments in the cities of Apple Valley, Burnsville, Eagan, Farmington, Hastings, Inver Grove Heights, Lakeville, Mendota Heights, Rosemount, South St. Paul, West St. Paul and Savage. Backstrom commented: *"This coordinated law enforcement effort has been extremely effective in investigating illegal drug activity and identifying those persons involved in illegal drug sales or use. Continuation of the Dakota County Drug Task Force, which relies heavily on federal grant funding, is vital in combating the serious problems associated with the use of methamphetamine and illegal drugs in our community."*

## **DEFENDANTS CHARGED WITH MURDER**

Backstrom indicated that **2** individuals were charged with **murder** in Dakota County (one which occurred on December 31, 2005) and **1** individual was charged with manslaughter in 2006. Also, one murder/suicide occurred in Burnsville in 2006. This was down significantly from the 17 murder prosecutions during the previous two years. Backstrom commented: *"Dakota County has historically averaged about three homicides per year (except in 2004 and 2005) and 2006 was consistent with this average. Homicide prosecutions involve significant time commitments on the part of both the County Attorney's Office and the investigating law enforcement agencies, and these prosecutions continue to strain our resources."*

## **FELONY STRANGULATION CASES**

Beginning August 1, 2005, it became a felony to strangle or attempt to strangle someone during a domestic violence struggle. Backstrom praised the new law which resulted in **81** individuals being charged with felony domestic violence in Dakota County in 2006. Backstrom commented: *"Domestic violence is a huge problem in our society and strangulation attempts signify an escalation of the level of violence in these cases. Making these serious crimes felonies was the right thing to do and will appropriately hold these offenders more accountable and provide greater protection to the victims of domestic violence."*

## **OTHER CRIMES OF VIOLENCE**

Backstrom indicated that felony charges involving crimes of violence<sup>4</sup> in Dakota County rose slightly to a new all-time high, rising to **519** in 2006 up from 512 the year before. The ten-year average (1997-2006) for violent crimes charged in Dakota County is 380 (see the attached chart). Of significant note, felony stalking charges rose significantly, up from 20 in 2005 to **48** in 2006. Felony assault charges also rose dramatically, from 141 in 2005 to **210** in 2006 (an increase of 49%). Sex-related felony charges dropped, however, from 118 in 2005 to **78** in 2006 (a decrease of 34%), as did charges of terroristic threats dropping from 105 in 2005 to **89** in 2006 (a decrease of 15%), and kidnapping, dropping from 18 in 2005 to **11** in 2006. Backstrom stated: *"While it is cause for concern that prosecutions for violent crime remain significantly higher than the 10-year average for these offenses in Dakota County, it is important to keep in mind that our violent crime rate is statistically quite low for the size of our County. Dakota County remains a safe community in which to live."*

## **CRIMINAL VEHICULAR HOMICIDE / INJURY AND FELONY DWI'S**

Backstrom said that **3** individuals were charged with Criminal Vehicular Homicide in Dakota County in 2006, which was the same number charged with this crime in 2005. Additionally, **16** individuals were charged with Criminal Vehicular Injury in Dakota County in 2006, compared with 10 charged with this crime in 2005. Also, felony DWI charges were filed against **66** defendants in Dakota County in 2006 (**4** of these individuals were charged with their second felony DWI). A felony DWI occurs if an offender has previously been convicted of three prior DWI's in the last 10 years.

Backstrom said his Office coordinates enforcement and prevention activities with the Safe Dakota Coalition, made up of all Dakota County law enforcement agencies and area high schools, community colleges and organizations committed to reducing alcohol-related crashes. *Backstrom commented: "Drunk driving kills or cripples more persons each year than any other crime in America. We must continue to dedicate resources to raise the level of awareness of these dangers in our efforts to prevent these tragedies."*

In 2006, more than 480 persons were killed in motor vehicle crashes across Minnesota (an estimated 37% were alcohol-related). In Dakota County, 82 individuals were severely injured and 20 were killed in motor vehicle crashes (27 of these 102 crashes were alcohol-related). *"This tragic loss of life and the debilitating injuries caused by crashes involving drunk drivers requires every effort we can make to prevent these tragedies from occurring," Backstrom added.*

## **AUTO THEFT DOWN**

Backstrom indicated that his Office coordinates a multi-jurisdictional auto theft prosecution unit that pursues prosecution of offenders stealing cars in Dakota, Scott and Carver counties. The number of individuals charged with felony auto theft-related offenses dropped from 163 in 2005 to **94** in 2006 in all three counties. In Dakota County alone, auto theft charges dropped from 105 in 2005 to **68** last year. Backstrom indicated that part of the state grant funding this tri-county auto theft prosecution project includes prevention efforts. Prevention efforts included two presentations at forums and distribution of auto theft awareness brochures at County fairs and other community events. Backstrom commented: *"Most cars stolen are unlocked with the keys left in them. To avoid falling victim to auto thieves, drivers need to take common sense precautions like locking their cars and keeping them in garages or more secure locations overnight whenever possible."*

## **OTHER PROPERTY CRIMES**

In reference to other felony property crimes, welfare fraud charges rose dramatically, doubling from 62 in 2005 to **125** in 2006. Forgery charges also rose significantly, up from 151 to **212** in 2006 (an increase of 40%), as did stolen property charges, rising from 73 in 2005 to **96** in 2006 (an increase of 31%). General theft-related charges rose slightly from 383 in 2005 to **402** in 2006 (an increase of 5%), as did robbery which rose from 40 in 2005 to **44** in 2006. Felony property-related charges in Dakota County which dropped included criminal damage to property, falling from 82 in 2005 to **65** in 2006 (a decrease of 21%) and burglary which fell from 151 charges in 2005 to **128** in 2006 (a decrease of 15%).

Attached is a chart detailing felony level charges filed by the Dakota County Attorney's Office in 2006. Also attached are charts comparing statistical information about adult felony prosecutions for the last decade. This information is also available on the Dakota County Attorney website at [www.dakotacounty.us](http://www.dakotacounty.us)

If you have any questions, contact James Backstrom at 651-438-4440.

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<sup>1</sup> Criminal charges are not evidence of guilt. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

<sup>2</sup> Some of these defendants may have been charged more than one time with crimes occurring in separate behavioral incidents.

<sup>3</sup> Some of these defendants were charged with crimes involving more than one illegal drug in the same or separate behavioral incidents.

<sup>4</sup> Felony crimes of violence include: homicide (murder, attempted murder, conspiracy to commit murder, and manslaughter), assault, offenses involving dangerous weapons, kidnapping, robbery, sex offenses, criminal vehicular homicide/injury and terroristic threats. The statistics referenced in this section reflect the number of felony charges and not defendants. A single defendant may be charged with more than one felony offense.

## 2006 ADULT FELONY OFFENSES

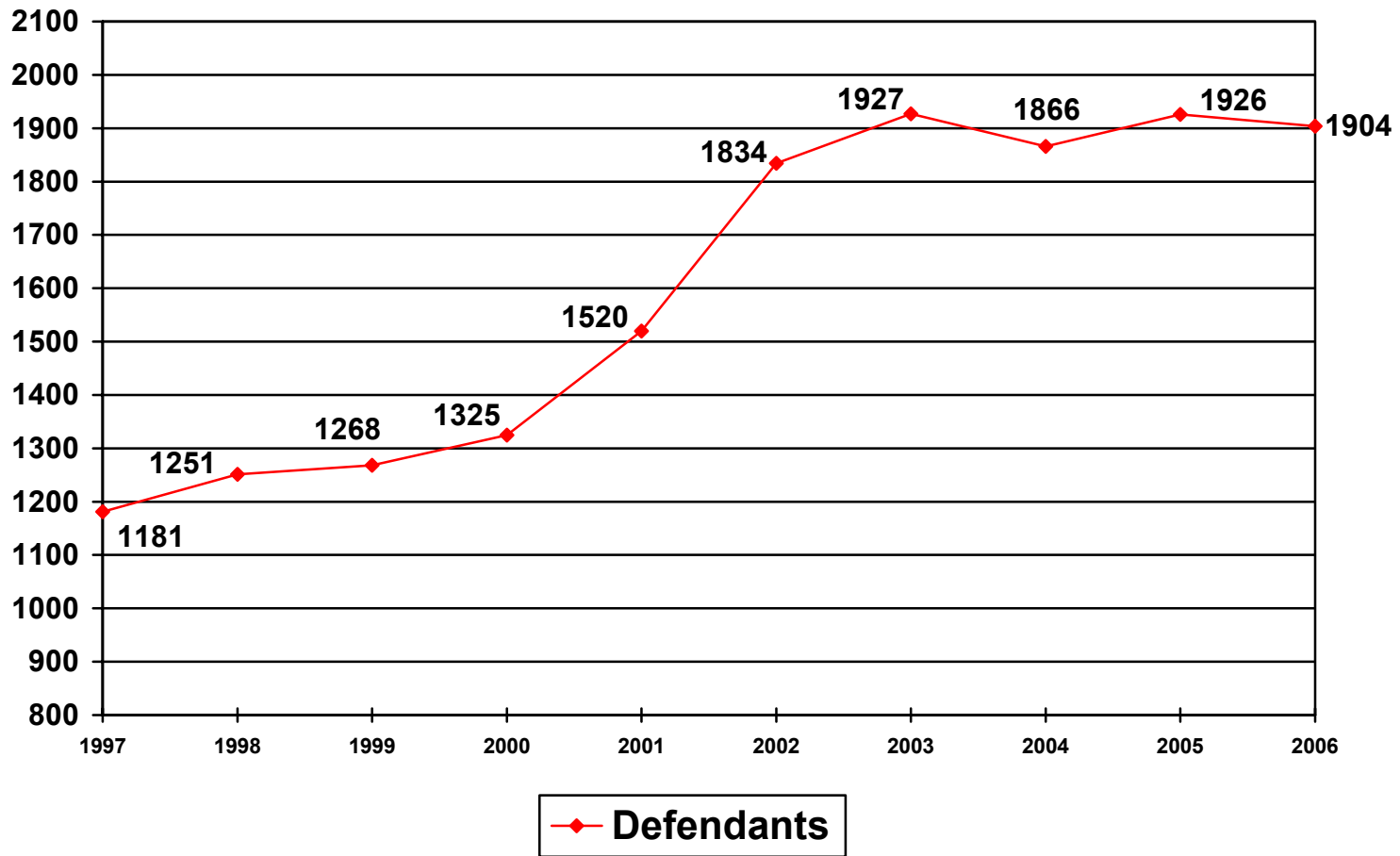
OFFICE OF DAKOTA COUNTY ATTORNEY  JAMES C. BACKSTROM COUNTY ATTORNEY  1560 HIGHWAY 55 HASTINGS, MN 55033-2392 651-438-4438																																
	Drug Related <sup>1</sup>	Theft-Related & Defeating Security <sup>2</sup>	Forgery Related	Burglary	Welfare Fraud	Felony DWI	Strangulation/Felony 5th/Domestic Assault	Assault-Related/Drive-By Shooting	Stolen Property <sup>2</sup>	Terroristic Threats	Sex-Related	Fugitive From Justice	Criminal Damage to Property	Traffic-Related (Including Fleeing with no injury)	Criminal Vehicular Homicide and Injury <sup>4</sup>	Stalking-Related	Tax-Related	Robbery	Public Health & Safety/Coercion	Possession or Use of Dangerous Weapons	Obstructing Justice, Escape, Public Corruption	Homicide, including Attempted <sup>3</sup>	Kidnapping	Unemployment & Workers Comp Fraud	Illegal Motor Vehicle Use <sup>2</sup>	Arson	Abuse/Neglect of Minor	Tampering With a Witness	Perjury Related	TOTAL CHARGES <sup>5</sup>	TOTAL DEFENDANTS	
Apple Valley	62	62	33	12	0	11	14	10	13	12	7	7	8	6	8	2	0	8	5	4	3	0	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	291	194	
Burnsville	190	87	23	27	0	35	19	26	11	24	14	9	10	6	0	16	0	6	1	5	1	3	6	0	2	1	2	1	0	525	372	
Dakota County Sheriff	72	29	11	4	125	19	2	3	3	2	1	33	4	11	5	1	0	0	1	1	3	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	339	228	
Eagan	109	57	29	22	0	6	20	5	14	9	19	5	12	4	3	8	0	6	5	1	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	342	232
Farmington	26	7	2	5	0	3	5	3	0	0	4	0	2	4	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	65	55	
Hastings	43	13	16	10	0	0	3	3	8	7	6	6	5	1	0	4	0	0	6	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	133	103	
Inver Grove Heights	52	28	9	13	0	4	10	17	4	3	0	2	6	4	10	1	0	5	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	174	139	
Lakeville	53	28	20	18	0	10	7	3	15	10	13	3	7	1	0	6	0	6	4	6	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	215	137	
Mendota Heights	15	2	1	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	27	18	
Minnesota State Patrol	24	3	2	0	0	6	0	2	3	2	0	0	0	7	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	68	41	
Other Law Enforcement	15	1	5	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	47	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	75	26	
Rosemount	25	16	5	6	0	1	4	2	4	5	2	1	3	4	3	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	84	64	
South St. Paul	35	26	13	5	0	6	19	16	6	4	10	3	5	5	4	4	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	164	106	
West St. Paul	82	43	43	4	0	8	7	9	15	11	1	4	3	4	0	5	0	11	0	4	2	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	262	189	
TOTAL	803	402	212	128	125	114	111	99	96	89	78	73	65	59	51	48	47	44	26	24	15	12	11	11	6	5	4	4	2	2764	1904	

1. Drug-related statistics are reported under the city where the offense occurred (drug offenses occurring in townships are recorded under the Dakota County Sheriff or other). Drug Task Force includes representatives from the Apple Valley, Burnsville, Eagan, Farmington, Hastings, Inver Grove Heights, Lakeville, Mendota Heights, Rosemount, Savage, South St. Paul, and West St. Paul Police Departments, and the Dakota County Sheriff's Office.
2. Auto theft-related charges are listed with Theft-Related, Stolen Property and/or Illegal Motor Vehicle Use offenses.
3. Homicide offenses include charges for murder, attempted murder, conspiracy to commit murder, and manslaughter.
4. Criminal Vehicular Homicide and Injury includes Fleeing a Police Officer in a Motor Vehicle that Results in Death or Injury.
5. Numbers in all categories include charges of attempts to commit the crime.

# Dakota County

## Adults Charged with Felonies

### 1997 to 2006

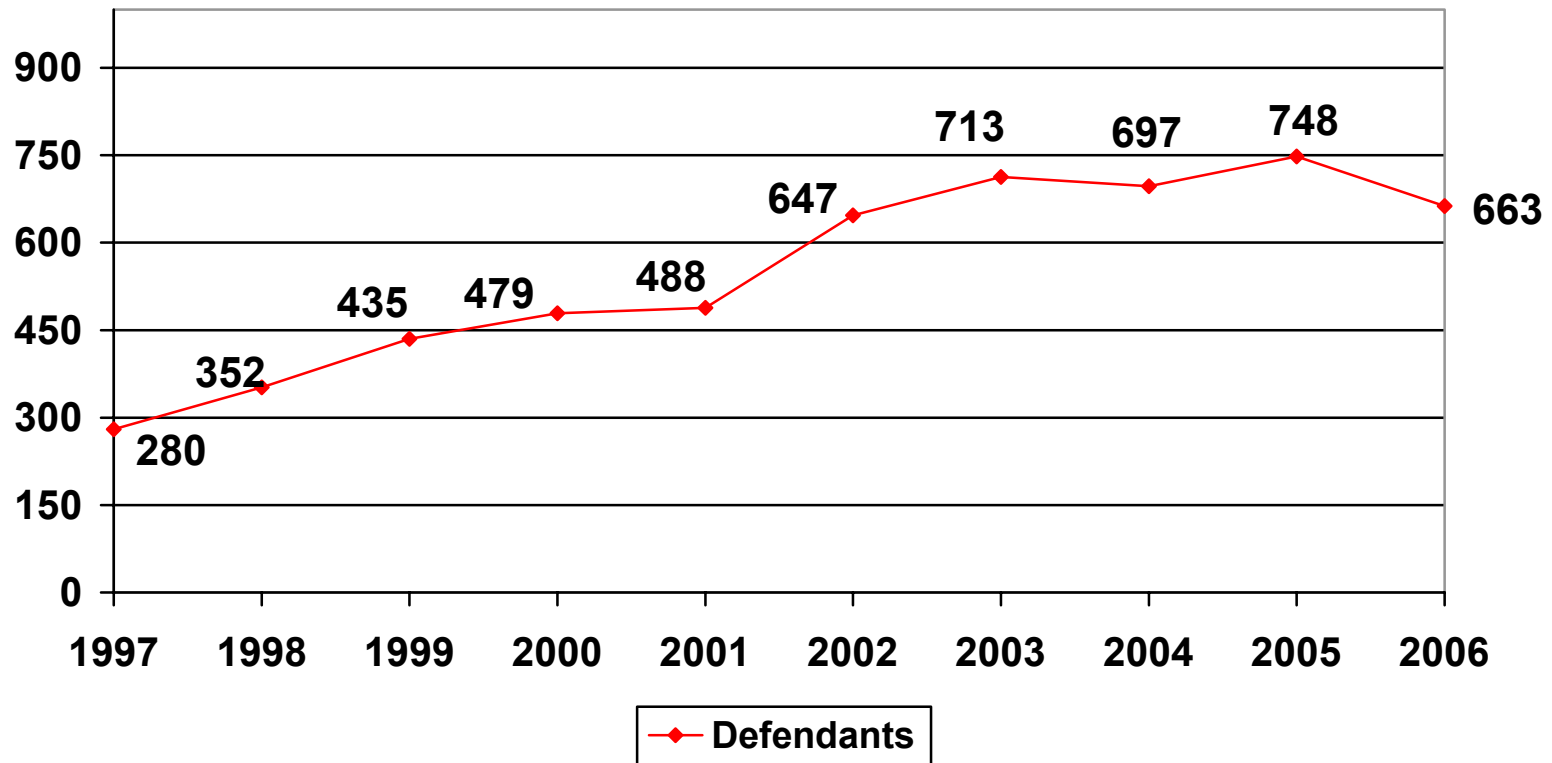


Compiled by: James C. Backstrom, Dakota County Attorney

# **Dakota County**

## **Adult Drug-Related Defendants Prosecuted**

### **1997-2006**



Compiled by: James C. Backstrom, Dakota County Attorney

# Dakota County

## Violent Crime Charges Involving Adult Defendants

### 1997 - 2006

CRIME	TEN YEAR AVE. 1997 – 2006	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
MURDER <sup>1</sup>	Figures Not Available	3 <sup>3</sup>	3 <sup>4</sup>	10 <sup>5</sup>	7 <sup>6</sup>	4 <sup>7</sup>
ATTEMPTED MURDER <sup>1</sup>	Figures Not Available	1	0	7	5	2
KIDNAPPING	12	14	11	15	18	11
SEX-RELATED	87	102	93	99	118	78
ROBBERY	34	44	29	27	40	44
FELONY ASSAULTS (includes felony strangulations after 8-01-05)	107	105	101	94	141	210
TERRORISTIC THREATS	75	86	73	82	105	89
DANGEROUS WEAPONS	30	41	36	48	24	24
CRIMINAL VEHICULAR HOMICIDE/INJURY	17	9	13	22	24	51
TOTAL <sup>2</sup> :	380	413	361	430	512	519

Compiled by: James C. Backstrom, Dakota County Attorney

<sup>1</sup>Murder and Attempted Murder figures, which also include conspiracy to commit murder and manslaughter (if any), reflect the actual number of persons charged with these offenses. The remaining crimes listed are based upon the number of felony charges filed.

<sup>2</sup>The total represents the number of charges of individual counts of violent crime (including murder, attempted murder, conspiracy to commit murder and manslaughter).

<sup>3</sup>There were three persons charged with homicide in 2002 in connection with three deaths.

<sup>4</sup>There were three persons charged with homicide in 2003 in connection with three deaths, one that occurred in 2000.

<sup>5</sup>There were ten persons charged with homicide in 2004 in connection with six deaths.

<sup>6</sup>There were seven persons charged with homicide in 2005 in connection with six deaths, one that occurred in 1979.

<sup>7</sup>There were three persons charged with homicide/manslaughter in 2006 in connection with three deaths, one that occurred in 2005. Also, one murder/suicide occurred in Burnsville.